

October 23, 2013

Dear Farm Bill Conferee:

The undersigned 150 farm, consumer, faith and rural organizations are writing to raise our strong objections to efforts to undermine the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to enforce the Packers and Stockyards Act.

Section 11102 of the House version of the 2013 Farm Bill would greatly limit the authority of the Secretary to address deceptive, fraudulent, retaliatory, and anti-competitive practices by meatpackers and poultry companies in their dealings with livestock and poultry farmers and ranchers.

During the 2008 Farm Bill process, Congress heard extensively from livestock and poultry producers, farmer organizations, and consumer groups about anti-competitive and unfair business practices that unfortunately have become commonplace in the livestock and poultry sectors of our agricultural economy.

As a result, the final 2008 Farm Bill included provisions to require USDA to write regulations to address the most egregious of these practices and to define certain terms in the statute. Section 11102 of the House version of the 2013 Farm Bill would repeal the 2008 Farm Bill provision that addressed these concerns and place a broad limitation on USDA's authority to enforce many aspects of the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921.

The impetus for Section 11102 is that the livestock and poultry companies whose practices were examined by the 2008 Farm Bill provisions and/or USDA's implementing regulations don't appreciate that scrutiny. Such practices include forcing poultry growers to make expensive upgrades to their chicken houses, at the same time as the companies controlling their contracts are secretly planning to shut down plants and cancel their contracts, leaving the farmers with massive stranded investments and facing bankruptcy, and leaving the taxpayers to pick up the tab.

These practices also include retaliating against farmers and ranchers for exercising their legal rights to communicate with their Members of Congress or USDA officials about the realities of certain livestock procurement practices as well as what is happening in their contract relationships with these companies. Section 11102 insulates, and prohibits USDA from addressing, these and other egregious practices in the livestock and poultry sectors.

Please reject Section 11102 of the House bill during the 2013 Farm Bill Conference and allow farmers and ranchers to prosper in a business environment based on mutual cooperation and fair business standards, not fear, coercion and retaliation.

Sincerely,

Letter to Conferees Opposing House Farm Bill Limitations on Packers and Stockyards Act Enforcement

Agricultural Missions, Inc. (NY)
Alabama Contract Poultry Growers Association
Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network
Alternative Energy Resources Organization (MT)
American Agriculture Movement
American Federation of Government Employees
(AFL-CIO), Local 3354, USDA-St. Louis
American Grassfed Association
Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake County (OH) Farmers' Union
Berks (PA) Gas Truth
BioRegional Strategies (NM)
Brooklyn Food Coalition (NY)
Buckeye Quality Beef Association (OH)
Bull Mountain Land Alliance (MT)
California Dairy Campaign
California Farmers Union
California Institute for Rural Studies
Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform
Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment
Caney Fork Headwaters Association (TN)
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (NC)
Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri—
Rural Life
Cattle Producers of Louisiana
Cattle Producers of Washington
Center for Food Safety
Center for Media and Democracy's Food Rights
Network
Center for Rural Affairs
Central Co-op (WA)
Church Women United of New York State
Citizen Action Coalition of Indiana
Citizens for Sanity.Com, Inc. (FL)
Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association
Community Alliance for Global Justice (WA)
Community Food & Agriculture Coalition (MT)
Community Food and Justice Coalition (CA)
Contract Poultry Growers Association of the Virginias
The Cornucopia Institute
Cornucopia Network NJ/TN Chapter
Cumberland Countians for Peace & Justice (TN)
Dakota Resource Council
Dakota Rural Action
East New York Farms!/United Community Centers
Ecological Farming Association (CA)
Endangered Habitats League (CA)
Equal Exchange
Family Farm Defenders (WI)
Farm Aid
Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
Farmworker Association of Florida
Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance
Fund
Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers, Inc.
Food & Water Watch
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Food Democracy Now!
Food First
Georgia Organics
Grassroots International
Hmong National Development, Inc.
Idaho Organization of Resource Councils
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
Independent Beef Association of North Dakota
(I-BAND)
Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska
Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
International Texas Longhorn Association
Intertribal Agriculture Council
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (MD)
Kansas Cattlemen's Association
Kansas Rural Center
Land Loss Prevention Project
Land Stewardship Project (MN)
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
(MOFGA)
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (WI)
Michigan Farmers Union
Michigan Land Trustees
Midwest Environmental Advocates (WI)
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service
Mississippi Assoc. of Cooperatives
Missouri Farmers Union
Missouri Rural Crisis Center
Missouri's Best Beef Cooperative
Montana Farmers Union
Murray County (OK) Independent Cattlemen's
Association
Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative (OK)
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA)
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farmers Organization
National Farmers Union
National Grange
National Organic Coalition
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Women Involved in Farm Economics
National Young Farmers Coalition
Nature Abounds (PA)
Nebraska Farmers Union
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society
Nebraska Women Involved in Farm Economics
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility
of United Church of Christ
Nevada Live Stock Association
New England Farmers Union
North Dakota Farmers Union
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. — MA
Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. — NH
Northeast Organic Farming Assoc. — VT

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Northeast Organic Farming Association, Interstate Council
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Northern Plains Resource Council (MT)
Northern Wisconsin Beef Producers
Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (MA)
Northwest Farm Bill Action Group
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Ohio Environmental Stewardship Alliance
Ohio Farmers Union
Oregon Rural Action
Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM)
Organic Seed Alliance
Organization for Competitive Markets
Peach Bottom Concerned Citizens Group (PBCCG) (PA)
Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture
Pesticide Action Network North America
Poultry Partners (AR)
Powder River Basin Resource Council (WY)
Provender Alliance (OR)
R-CALF USA
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Roots of Change

Rural Advancement Foundation International — USA
Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
Rural Development Leadership Network (NY)
Rural Vermont
Simply Living (OH)
Slow Food California
Slow Food USA
South Dakota Farmers Union
South Dakota Stockgrowers Association
Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
Tilth Producers of Washington
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Weiser River Resource Council (ID)
Western Colorado Congress
Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC)
Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group
WhyHunger
Williams County Alliance (OH)
Women Involved in Farm Economics (WIFE)
Women, Food and Agriculture Network